

Members of the appropriations Committee:

Good afternoon Committee Members:

I write in support of the structural changes in the budgeting process 2016/17 and beyond. I also write to request that committee members give careful consideration before further reducing the states advertising efforts. Doing so will result in undoing the significant progress made in the tourism sector by the state over the past 4 years.

The advertising campaign undertaking by DECD over the past four years has steadily rebuilt the image of Connecticut as a place to visit and conduct business.

For example,

- Visitors are staying longer and spending more resulting in a steady increase in overnight stays, 4 nights or longer, 13% increase in 2012, 17% in 2014, 21% in 2015.
- Attendance at leading attractions is also up significantly: a 12% increase over 2014 from 2,423,692 visits to 2,712,074 visits.
- Traveler Spending per Trip: up 4% over 2014 from \$875 per trip to \$906.
- Summer Overnight Stays: Percent occupied, average daily rate and revenue per room have increased over 2014 by 4%, 3% and 7% respectively.
- Room Occupancy Tax: Increased revenues for the state through the room occupancy tax, up 9% \$238 million in 2014, \$215 million in 2015 creating \$22 million in additional revenue
- Employment Growth: 118,500 jobs are supported by the tourism industry with 80,000 being directly in tourism
- Economic Development: \$14 billion spent by travelers in 2014, and \$1.6 billion collected in tax revenues between the state and local levels.

These are just a few of examples of the increased revenues that resulted from your support for the states advertisement budget and the resulting advertising campaigns. Cutting back on tourism funding at this time will undo much of the hard work and accomplishments that have been gained in recent years. The results clearly show that investing in tourism is indeed an investment and not expenditure. Again, thank you for your public service and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.